Congressman Baird Secures $6 Million for Vancouver-based Defense Projects (June 7, 2005)

Washington, D.C. - Congressman Brian Baird today announced he secured $6 million for Vancouver-based defense projects. The funding, approved by the House Defense Appropriations Subcommittee, will help keep and create jobs in Southwest Washington, protect American troops, and enhance national security.

ï¿½This funding will be a tremendous asset to Southwest Washington and to the security of our nation,ï¿½ said Congressman Brian Baird. ï¿½This money will create new jobs in our area and strengthen our economic base. It will also provide critical protection to our armed forces serving in combat and help protect Americans right here at home.ï¿½

Armor Systems International (ASI) will receive $1 million for the development of its advanced vehicle protection system; Oregon Ironworks will receive $3 million to partially construct Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs); and nLight Photonics Corporation will receive $2 million to conduct research and development of high power semiconductor lasers for the U.S. Air Force

Armor Systems Internationalï¿½s Advanced Vehicle Protection System

ASI, a three-year old Vancouver-based company, will receive $1 million to develop an advanced vehicle protection system that will protect U.S. soldiers and marines from Rocket Propelled Grenade (RPG) attacks on their Humvees and other lightly armored vehicles.

ï¿½I have been to Walter Reed Army Medical Center and spent time with soldiers who have lost limbs and lost friends to RPGs. ASIï¿½s innovative protection system will do a great deal to prevent the needless killing and maiming RPGs inflict upon our soldiers,ï¿½ said Congressman Baird. ï¿½In addition to providing greater security to our troops, this contract will create jobs and economic security in the Vancouver area.ï¿½

The vehicle protection system ASI will develop is specially designed to counter the unique threat of RPG rounds. The system will detect, engage, and detonate an incoming RPG round 15 to 20 feet before it makes contact with a target vehicle. Most conventional armor systems rely exclusively on steel and other materials to deflect an incoming RPG round. ASIï¿½s protection system is designed to be easily and safely deployed with minimal training by soldiers in the field.

ï¿½We are excited about creating jobs in the Northwest ï¿½ both directly for us and indirectly for our suppliers,ï¿½ said Terry Billedeaux, President of ASI. ï¿½This funding brings additional creditability to ASI as an innovative and viable three-year old company. Not only will RPG technology save the lives of our troops, but it also protects the expensive machinery they are operating.ï¿½

Oregon Ironworksï¿½ Unmanned Aerial Vehicle

Vancouver-based Oregon-Ironworks will receive $3 million to design and partially construct an advanced Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) to help the Navy conduct covert aerial surveillance and reconnaissance.

ï¿½UAVs are vitally important because they have the potential to save countless lives, both at home and abroad,ï¿½ Congressman Baird said. ï¿½It is incredible Southwest Washington will play a role in pioneering technology with such valuable national security applications.ï¿½

According to the Navy, one of the most promising applications of the UAV will be its ability to carry sensors capable of searching for weapons of mass destruction - chemical, biological and nuclear - by analyzing air samples taken from

suspect areas. The UAV will also be used for fleet-protection.

ï¿½We at Oregon Ironworks are very pleased and excited about the prospect of developing and growing the unmanned vehicle industry in the Pacific Northwest,ï¿½ said Chandra Brown, Vice President of Oregon Ironworks. ï¿½This is a major step towards that goal. The funding will enable us to retain and hire more experts in the field.ï¿½

nLight Photonics Corporation Laser Technology Development:

Vancouver-based nLight Photonics Corporation will receive $2 million to conduct research and development of high power semiconductor lasers for the U.S. Air Force.

ï¿½It is exciting that some of the most advanced lasers in the world are being designed and built right here in Vancouver,ï¿½ said Congressman Baird. ï¿½These lasers are already protecting Americans and making our country more secure. This contract is great news for our regionï¿½s economy and for our national defense.ï¿½

nLight is a leading manufacturer of high power semiconductor lasers used in a wide range of military, industrial, and medical applications. Currently, high power laser diodes are produced one laser at a time and are subsequently assembled into clusters of thousands of lasers. nLight will reduce production costs by integrating its lasers from the onset, utilizing wafer scale fabrication techniques that are similar to the integration of thousands of transistors in a computer chip.

"This funding will enable nLight to begin developing high power semiconductor lasers with a level of integration similar to that in the electronics industry," said Jason Farmer, nLightï¿½s Vice President of Advanced Technology. "This technology will dramatically lower the cost of high power semiconductor lasers and enable widespread usage in many important military and industrial applications."
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